

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HONG K 11656 240847Z
ACTION EA-12

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO USMISSION GENEVA IMMEIDATE
SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2875
INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES FROM HONG KONG TO MACAU

REF: A) GENEVA 12817 AND B) STATE 214222

1. WHILE WE BELIEVE THAT DISAGREEMENT WITHIN MACAU GOVT ON TRANSFER TO REFUGEES WILL BE STRAIGHTENED OUT THIS WEEK, IT IS NOT YET DEFINITE. DIRECTOR OF CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES, WHO IS MEETING WITH UNDERSECRETARY FOR SOCIAL WELFARE TODAY, IS CONFIDENT THAT HE WILL BE ABLE INFORM CARPENTER TOMORROW THAT MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES FROM HONG KONG TO MACAU HAS BEEN REAFFIRMED. CARPENTER TOLD US THAT HE IS WAITING FOR THIS ASSURANCE BEFORE PLANNING ANY TRANSFER TO MACAU.

2. UNHCR FAR EAST DESK OFFICER WAS MISINFORMED ABOUT THE 285 REFUGEES IN MACAU. THEY ARE REFUGEES WHO ARRIVED DIRECTLY IN MACAU AND NO RPT NO REFUGEES HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED TO MACAU FROM HONG KONG.

3. TRANSFER OF REFUGEES HAS BECOME MORE URGENT. TOTAL OF 558 REFUGEES ARRIVED HONG KONG AUGUST 24 OF WHOM 401 WERE ON U.S.S. WHIPPLE. UNHCR REP CARPENTER DOES NOT HAVE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ALL OF THEM AND IT
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APPEARS THAT 157 ON A HONG KONG JUNK WILL HAVE TO REMAIN ABOARD UNTIL ACCOMMODATIONS ARE FOUND. HONG KONG IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL CHARGED WITH REFUGEES MATTERS TOLD US THIS MORNING IN STATE OF SHOCK THAT PRESENT ACCOMMODATION CRISIS STEMS FROM ARRIVAL USS WHIPPLE AND IN FUTURE NO REFUGEES WILL BE LANDED FROM U.S. NAVAL VESSELS UNLESS THEY CAN BE ACCOMMODATED.

4. WITH ARRIVALS ON AUGUST 24, THERE ARE NOW 2722 REFUGEES IN HONG KONG WHO, AT THAT LEVEL, WILL BRING MONTHLY CARE AND MAINTENANCE BILL CLOSE TO \$600,000.

5. WE BELIEVE THAT APPROXIMATELY 120 REFUGEES COULD BE TRANSFERRED TO MACAU NEXT WEEK IF CARPENTER CAN FIND TIME TO ARRANGE IT AFTER TAKING CARE OF AUGUST 24 HONG KONG ARRIVALS. SUCH TRANSFER WOULD BE PUT TOTAL NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN MACAU AT 400, WHICH NUMBER CARPENTER FEELS HE CANNOT EXCEED WITHOUT LETTER FROM MACAU GOVT. THAT WILL BECOME NEXT PROBLEM TO BE RESOLVED.

6. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT MACAU OPTION CAN RELIEVE REFUGEE PRESSURE IN HONG KONG AND SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE UNHCR COSTS IF PURSUED WITH SOME VIGOR. TO DATE IT HAS NOT BEEN DONE. REFTEL (A) AND PREVIOUS CABLES RAISE QUESTION OF AMOUNT AND QUALITY INFORMATION UNHCR GENEVA IS RECEIVING ABOUT MACAU FROM UNHCR FIELD OFFICES.

7. IT IS BECOMING EVIDENT AT THIS END THAT BEST, AND PERHAPS ONLY, WAY TO UTILIZE POTENTIAL OF MACAU SOON WOULD BE FOR UNHCR DETAIL PERSON HERE FOR TWO OR THREE MONTHS TO HANDLE ACCOMMODATION QUESTION ON FULL TIME BASIS, TO BE FAIR TO CARPENTER, HE HAS ALMOST FULL TIME JOB HANDLING NEW ARRIVALS AND PERHAPS CANNOT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEVOTE SUFFICIENT TIME TO ACCOMMODATION PROBLEM. FOR EXAMPLE, HE HAS BEEN TO MACAU ONLY ONCE FOR TWO DAYS TO INTERVIEW REFUGEES. ONLY MACAU GOVT OFFICIAL HE SAW WAS DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE. WE BELIEVE MORE AND FREQUENT UNHCR-MACAU CONTACT IS NEEDED IF ANY SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF REFUGEES ARE TO BE TRANSFERRED THERE AND THAT IT WOULD BE FULL TIME JOB FOR SEVERAL MONTHS.

8. FOR DEPT. HONG KONG 11487 PROVIDED STATUS REPORT IN RESPONSE TO GENEVA 12633 AND 12721.
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